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#### **ABSTRACT**

Eighty schools that were members of, the Iowa High School Press Association responded to a questionnaire about the school newspaper's financial status in light of public school budget cuts. The collected data indicated that nearly half of the respondent schools published newspapers at no cost and in cooperation with a community newspaper. Sixty school papers had subsidies from the school of \$500 or less; the majority of these did not accept advertising, and neither subscriptions nor individual sales of newspapers made up the revenues. Responses in other categories indicated that school newspaper personnel were attempting to economize, in that many schools had typesetting equipment and 80% of the schools did their own paste-up and darkroom work. Other responses indicated a healthy physical situation for newspapers in that over half published twice or more per month. A cross-tabulation of the total budget with the printing method showed that as budget size increased, the schools tended to publish independently. As circulation increased to about 1,900 schools tended to accept advertising, but only a fraction of those with a circulation of 2,000 or more accepted advertisi Those with a per issue cost tended to have offset printing and typesetting. Based on this study, the economic stability of school newspapers appears sound. (HTH)

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# HIGH SCHOOL NEWSPAPER FINANCING:

AN ASSESSMENT

TO THE FOUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Jack Dvorak

School of Journalism and Mass Communication

The University of Iowa

A paper submitted for presentation at the mid-winter meeting of the Secondary Education Division of the Association for Education in Journalism, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma. January, 1982.

# High School Newspaper Financing: An Assessment

While much has been said and written about the economic crunch in America's schools, little evidence is available that correlates high school newspapers with this trend.

In fact, a study of 90 Iowa high schools that have newspapers indicates that the school paper could be one of the truly fine bargains within modern education.

The literature available in this area, although scarce, points to a parallel between the general budget tightening and school publications—a finding not consistent with the current study. In his nonors lecture to the Secondary Education Division of the Association for Education in Journalism convention in 1981, Robert P. Knight said that the financial crisis was real, even though scholastic journalism had survived it well. With smaller school enrollments, shrinking family budgets, school closings and general state and local fiscal crises, school publications have been adversely affected.

One result for school newspapers has been longer and longer gaps between issues. That's not good. It deprives journalism students of that steady writing and editing practice they need. Worse, it makes the newspaper less a news medium . . . less informative than it should be.<sup>2</sup>

However, Eveslage was not able to find much empirical research in the area of financing school publications in his 1980 study.



In his formulation of a research agenda for journalism in the secondary schools, Eveslage analyzed seven journals pertaining to scholastic journalism and surveyed 72 members of AEJ's Secondary Education Division. From the content analysis and survey, he found four major categories for research with the first being "Student Publications and the Journalism Class." This concerns "dealing with the production of a high school newspaper or yearbook or the composition of a journalism or mass media class." In that category were found, as most common research topics suggested by content analysis, "problems of financial instability and insufficient staff."5

Of the empirical research available, recent study by
Mary Benedict of principals and newspaper advisers in nine
states compares perceptions of the role of newspapers of
those two groups. In the area of financing the school paper,
the two groups were similar in their views of an ideal method of
financing. When responses of the 191 principals and 141
advisers were combined, 41.9 percent chose school subsidy
as the ideal. The remaining methods of ideal newspaper financing
follow in rank order: advertising, 33.1%; subscriptions, 11.4%;
forced subscriptions, 5.7%; activity fee, 5.4%; use of space
in a local paper, 2.1%; and money-making projects, 0.3%. As
will be seen later, the present study does not confirm these
perceptions with the realities of newspaper financing.

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A subsequent question follows the general category of financing: Is there a relationship between the methods and extent of financing and the quality of the school paper?

Eveslage found that journalism educators expressed that concern as a possible question for research.

Mercatilli writes that if staff members must finance the newspaper through non-journalistic endeavors, the quality of the paper will decline because the fund-raising activities will take precedence over writing, reporting and editing. 9

She concludes that better financing through school subsidies or traditional advertising approaches will mean less time spent on fund-raisers, and a much better newspaper will result. 10.

Another effect of financing is seen in the contest ratings school papers receive. An M.A. thesis by Thomas A. Blick snows that "the most influential single factor in newspaper ratings to be the amount of money the school provides for the newspaper." In the study, all 1,172 Columbia Scholastic Press Association newspaper contest entrants between 1975 and 1978 were examined. More than 72% of school papers with high ratings received some school funds while only about 49% of the non-winners received a school subsidy. Also, the average school funding for winners was \$1,882.33 while the low-rated newspapers received an average of only \$617.02 from the school.12

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Blick explains several of the relationships between money and ratings: Higher budgets mean the printing of larger editions with a more thorough coverage, better quality design and artwork for a superior appearance and the opportunity to send staff members to various newspaper workshops. 13

On the other hand, and perhaps perplexing to advisers especially, another study found that editors feel more freedom as institutional funding is decreased. 14 "In essence, editors are only as free as they feel. Therefore, a newspaper is more free if it gets 40% of its funds from the institution than it is if it gets 70%. 15 Although the study was done in 1977 with college editors as subjects, some relationship to the high school newspaper seems logical. Another finding of the same study was that as financing from the institution decreased, financial (and censorship) pressures increased from other influences such as student governments, athletic departments, Greeks, community leaders and other campus groups that advertise. 16

Thus, according to literature available, school newspapers face economic difficulties that affect amount of content, quality of content and appearance, frequency of publication, ratings in contests and freedom of the press. And principals and advisers frequently choose the school subsidy as the ideal method of financing with advertising second and subscriptions third.

#### Finances in Iowa School Newspapers

Of 152 members of the Iowa High School Press
Association, all are asked to complete rather extensive



financial information for the permanent files but not to be used as a part of the published membership directory. A follow-up mailing was done in November in order to have thorough 1981-1982 information. Of 122 respondents, only 80 forms were usable. Even among the 80 used, some categories of information were left blank. One might assume that information asked for, particularly related to finances, was not known by the advisers who provided the directory data.

In the study, 45% (36 of 80) publish in a local newspaper, 51.2% (41) do not have (or do not report) any per-issue cost, and 47.5% (38) do not have (or do not report) any budget whatsoever for the newspaper. According to these figures, nearly half of the respondent schools publish newspapers at no cost and in cooperation with a community paper.

Of the 42 schools with budgets, the average total is \$3,112 per year.

However, 58.7% (47 of 80) did not list any school subsidy for the newspaper. And an additional 16.3% (13) received \$500 or less from the school; thus, 75% (60 schools) have subsidies from the schools of \$500 or less.

Of the 41.3% (33) that receive school subsidies, the average is \$1,693.

One might think that extensive advertising revenues would make up the difference for many school newspapers, especially

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those receiving little or no subsidy from the school. Only 42.5% (34) of the Iowa schools accept advertising, leaving the majority (57.5%) with no ad revenue. Of those schools reporting advertising revenue, the average yearly income is \$2,607. Of the papers that advertise, the most common column-inch charge was between \$2.01 and \$3 (15 schools). Only 3 schools charged between \$1 and \$1.50; 6 were between \$1.51 and \$2; and 9 were \$3 or more.

Do subscriptions or individual sales of newspapers make up the economic difference? Apparently not, as 85% (68 of 80 schools) report using neither of these techniques for support. Of those selling subscriptions (15%), the average yearly price is \$3.41.

Several other general categories indicate that the school newspaper personnel are attempting to economize. More than 21% (17 newspaper staffs) have some typesetting equipment and do all or part of their production. And fully 80% (64) do pasteups; 83.7% (67) have a school darkroom with an average photo cost per year of \$397 of those reporting that information.

Other data indicate a relatively healthy physical situation for school newspapers: 31.3% (25) are weeklies, another 31.3% (25) are published twice a month and 12.5% (10) are issued every three weeks. Thus, 62.5% are twice monthly or more frequent while 75% are once every 3 weeks or more frequent. The remaining 25% (20 newspapers) are monthly or less frequent.



Because of the large number of papers published as a part of community papers, 40% (32) list one page as the average per issue. Despite this situation, the average pages per issue for all 80 papers is almost 5.3. When the other 48 papers with more than one page are isolated, their average pages per issue is almost 9.

Other indicators of a positive physical situation include: 21.2% (17) occasionally publish special editions; only 11.2% (9) indicate that they let yearly bids; 80% (64) own a camera; 26.2% (21 schools) have special graphics facilities or equipment; 51.2% (41) of the advisers have college or professional journalism experience; 86.3% (69) of the advisers have 2 or more years of experience in their current journalistic assignment; 66.2% (53) have an endorsement to teach journalism in Iowa, which is a minimum of 12 semester hours in journalism (however, only 57.5%--46 advisers--responded that they had taken 12 hours or more. The discrepancy might be because some have received temporary endorsement by the Department of Public Instruction).

While all 80 are members of the state press association, only 17.5% (14) are members of The National Scholastic Press Association, 18.8% (15) are members of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association and 13.7% (11) have chapters of the Quill and Scroll Honorary Society.

#### Other Relationships

Because the data involved are taken from directory information, no possibility of comparative statistical procedures is possible. However, by using a nonparametric test (chi-square) with nominal scaling, it is possible to gain greater insights into the data by seeing how items within the sample fit when compared with each other. A significant chi-square statistic indicates the lack of goodness of fit, and from this it is possible to examine trends and relationships.

#### Total Budget

The total budget a school newspaper has to work with was found to have several significant relationships among the data.

A crosstabulation of the total budget by the printing method (Table 1) shows a significant relationship (p < .001). Those listing no budgets tended to publish in a community newspaper while as budget sizes increased the schools tended to publish independently.

Also, as the total budgets increased, so did the probability (p < .001) that advertising would be accepted (Table 2).

The total budget has some significance when contrasted with membership in NSPA (Table 3). Only 4 of 38 schools reporting no budgets are members while 6 schools of 13 with budgets over \$4,000\$ are members (p < .02). It was also

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found that the schools with the biggest budgets captured the high NSPA awards (p < .03).

Similar tendencies are noted for CSPA membership (Table 4).

Of 38 schools listing no budget, only 6 are CSPA members while

7 of 13 with budgets over \$4,000 are members (p < .01). Those
same schools also tended to receive high awards as opposed
to the schools with no or low budgets (p < .04).

No statistically significant relationships were found when comparing the total budget, with schools that did their own typesetting, total ad revenue, subscriptions and sales, single copy price, letting yearly bids, the amount of journalism experience the adviser has, the adviser's tenure in the current assignment, the adviser's journalism endorsement and membership in Quill and Scroll.

### School Subsidy

Several significant relationships among categories are noted when using the school subsidy as the basis for comparison. Dice again, the printing method, when compared with school subsidy, is significant (p < .01) (Table 5). Those schools listing no school subsidy or a subsidy of \$900 or less seem about equally split between printing independently or publishing through a local paper. However, those with school subsidies over \$1,200 tend to publish independently.

Interestingly, those schools with larger school subsidies tend to accept advertising with greater frequency than those

schools with little or no school subsidy (p < .01) (Table 6).

Also, as school subsidies increased, so did the number of schools that had yearly bidding for printing of the newspaper (p < .001). As Table 7 shows, 45 of 47 schools reporting no subsidy also do not accept yearly bids. None of 13 schools with \$900 or less subsidy accepts yearly bids while 7 of 20 schools with subsidies of \$1,200 or more accept bids. Of the schools with the highest subsidies, the 10 with more than a \$3,000 subsidy per year, fully half accept yearly bids for printing the newspaper.

The school subsidy also was a significant factor in national journalism association membership.

The schools with no subsidies or ones with subsidies up to \$2,500 also tended to not be members of NSPA (p < .03) while those with \$3,000 or more subsidies tended to have more membership by comparison (Table 8). Additionally, a much higher percentage of those with large school subsidies have won top awards in NSPA than those with no or little subsidy (p < .01).

Much the same trend can be noticed with CSPA membership (Table 9). As the subsidy increases, so does the tendency of schools to also be a member of that organization (p < .05). However, there was no significant relationship between subsidy and the ratings received from CSPA, which there was with both NSPA and Quill and Scroll.

The Quill and Scroll members were significantly related to the school subsidy (p < .01) (Table 10). As the subsidy increased, so did the tendency of those schools to also have chapters. Only 3 schools of 47 with no subsidy had chapters while 5 of 10 schools with \$3,000 or more in school subsidies had them. Quill and Scroll ratings were related to school subsidies as well (p < .001). Only one school out of 5 of those with no or small budgets received the highest award—the Gallup—while 4 of 5 with budgets of \$3,000 or more received that award.

No statistically significant relationships were observed between school subsidies and schools with typesetting equipment, the price of advertising, total ad revenue, subscriptions and sales, single copy price, the adviser's journalistic experience, the adviser's tenure in the present school assignment or the adviser's journalism endorsement.

## Utilization of Advertising

Of importance to the study of school newspaper financing seems to be the degree to which the papers use or do not use advertising as a source of revenue. Several important relationships can be observed statistically. As Table 11 shows, as circulation expands up to about the 1,900 category, there seems to be a tendency for schools to accept advertising. Then in the 2,000+ circulation category, there is an abrupt change: Only 7 of 40 schools accept advertising (p < .001). Again,



this can probably be explained because of the high number of schools that utilize publishing in the community newspaper-no advertising (on the school's part) is necessary and circulations often exceed 2,000.

This is verified by Table 12 that shows a high relationship (p < .001) between acceptance of ads and printing method.

Of 34 schools that use ads, only 2 are pages in a local paper while 34 of 46 schools that do not accept ads are pages in a local paper.

Also related to accepting ads is whether or not a school does any typesetting (p < .04). It might be expected that those schools with ads in papers would also have to create those ads for prospective clients. Eleven of 34 schools that accept ads do typesetting while only 6 of 46 that do not accept ads do any typesetting.

Significant at the p < .001 level is the relationship between utilizing advertising and selling subscriptions or single copies. Of schools with advertising, 21 of 34 do not sell the paper, but of those without advertising, 45 of 46 do not sell subscriptions or have single-copy sales. It seems that schools needing to support their papers with advertising must also seek additional revenues by sales, but those with no advertising are also supported in other ways that eliminate the need for subscriptions or sales.



Also significant (p < .01) is the relationship between accepting ads and letting yearly bids. Eight of 34 schools with ads in newspapers also accept printing bids yearly while only 1 of 46 schools not using advertising accepts yearly bids.

Membership in CSPA is statistically significant when crosstabulated with accepting advertising (p < .04). While 10 of 34 schools using advertising are members of CSPA, only 5 of 46 school newspapers that do not accept ads are members. The CSPA rating is also significant when compared with using or not using advertising (p < .05). Those using ads tended to receive higher awards than those that did not.

Similar findings were evident between ad acceptance and membership in Quill and Scroll. But no significance was found between using advertising and membership or ratings connected with NSPA.

of 34 schools using ads, 9 had Quill and Scroll charters while only 2 of 46 schools not using ads were members (p < .02). Of additional interest is the large number of Gallup and International First Place Awards (8 of 34) among schools using ads compared with the fact that the highest a paper with no advertising received was International Second Place, and only 2 of 46 schools were involved (p < .02).

No significant relationships were observed when crosstabulations were run between acceptance of advertising and single copy



price, adviser's journalistic experience, adviser's years in current assignment or adviser's journalistic endorsement.

#### Cost Per Issue

A final category involving total cost per issue adds more insight into the school newspaper financial picture.

As the per issue price increases, school newspapers tend to be rrinted by offset and not in conjunction with a local paper (p < .001). Thirty-two of 41 schools with no cost per issue publish in community papers while only 3 of 9 with budgets of \$100 or less publish in the local paper, and all 18 of the schools with per issue costs over \$101 are printed independently.

Cost per issue is also significantly related to typesetting (p < .01) (Table 13). Only 4 of 41 schools with no cost per issue do any typesetting, and those who have per issue costs tend to also have a higher percentage of typesetting done at the school or by newspaper staffers.

Another significant relationship is found between cost per issue and the acceptance of advertising (p < .001) (Table 14). As the cost per issue increases, so does the probability that the newspaper accepts advertising.

Accepting yearly bids is also related to the cost per issue (p < .01). While only 1 of 41 school papers with no cost per issue accepts yearly bids, 6 of 18 papers with costs



per issue of over \$251 accept bids.

No significant relationships were found when comparing the categories of cost per issue with ad price; total ad revenue; single copy price; subscription cost; adviser's journalistic experience; adviser's years in the current position; adviser's journalism endorsement; adviser's semester hours in journalism; membership in NSPA, CSPA of Quill and Scroll; and ratings in NSPA, CSPA or Quill and Scroll.

### Other Considerations

Because of extensive donations of time, labor and equipment from the community press, almost half of the schools in the Iowa study have little or no financial concern. (Other than a service to the school and community, one might wonder if publishers of those community papers receive tax breaks, which is another research question under study. The elusive IRS Taxpayers Service Division agents were not able to respond before deadline.)

But that situation is obviously a financial plus for schools with such an arrangement. It could be that some other school newspaper staffs who find the selves in financial high water could explore possibilities of publishing on a regular basis within a local commercial newspaper. Pat Schultz, an Iowa adviser, has found that some publishers even produce extra tear sheets of the school newspaper page at a small extra charge so that students at the school can have personal copies. 17



For those schools with advertising, several articles are available that might help staffs increase revenues. 18

Also, some information is available regarding the use of journalistic skills not directly connected with the school newspaper in order to help finance the publication, <sup>19</sup> as is information available on helping finance the newspaper through non-journalism activities. <sup>20</sup>

Based on the information available in this Iowa study, the economic stability of school newspapers seems sound. Future studies of a comparative and longitudinal nature need to be done to see if this rather positive situation in 1982 continues or changes.



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TABLE 1
Crosstabulation of Total Budget By Printing Method

Total Budget	Printing	Method		
	Offset	Page	in Local	Paper
None	10		28	(38)
\$50-\$500	3	<b>b</b>	5	(8)
\$700-\$3,600	19		2	(21)
\$4,000+	12		1	(13)
	(44)		(36)	80
$x^2 = 31.6$	12	df = 3		p < .001

TABLE 2
Crosstabulation of Total Budget By Accepting Advertising

Total Budget	Accep	t Adve	rtising		
•	Yes		No		
None	. 8	•	30	(38)	
\$50-\$500	1 .		7	(8)	
\$700-\$3,600	- 13		8	(21)	
<b>\$4,000+</b>	12		1	(13)	
•	(34)		(46)	80	
$x^2 = 26.$	532	df	= 3	p< .00	1



TABLE 3
Crosstabulation of Total Budget By Membership in NSPA

Total Budget		Membership.in NSPA	<u> </u>
	Yes	ч <u><b>No</b></u>	ی
None	4	34	(38)
\$50-\$500	2	6	(8)
\$700-\$3,600	2	19	(21)
\$4,000+	6	7	(13)
ı	(14)	(66)	, 80
$x^2 = 9.9$	1 •	df = 3	p < .02

TABLE 4
Crosstabulation of Total Budget By Membership in CSPA

Total Budget		Membership in CS	SPA	
	Yes	No		
None.	6	32	(38)	
\$50-\$500	0	8	(8)	
\$700\$3,600	2	19	(21)	
\$4,000+	, <b>7</b>	6	(13)	
-	(15)	(65)	80	
$x^2 = 13.7$	49	df = 3	p < .01	,

TABLE 5

Crosstabulation of School Subsidy By Printing Method

School Subsidy	Printing	Method	•
	Offset	Page	in Local Paper
None	20	27	. (47)
\$70-\$900	6	. 7	(13)
\$1,200-\$2,500	9	1,	, (10)
\$3,000+	9	1	(10)
	(44)	(36)	80
$x^2 = 13.252$		df = 3	p <.01

TABLE 6
Crosstabulation of School Subsidy By Accepting Advertising

School Subsidy	Accept	Advertising	
	7es	No	
None	17	30	(47)
\$70 <b>-</b> \$900	2	11,	(13)
\$1,200-\$2,500	6	4	(10)
, \$3,000+	9	1	(10)
	(34)	(46)	80
$x^2 = 15.$	168	df = 3	, p < .01

TABLE 7
Crosstabulation of School Subsidy By Accepting Yearly Bids

School Subsidy	Accept.	Yearly Bids	,
•	Yes	No	•
None	2	45	(47)
\$70-\$900	0	13	(13)
\$1,200-\$2,500	2	8 '	(10)
\$3,000+	5	5	(10)
	(9)	(71)	80
$x^2 = 19.3$	757	df = 3	p < .001

TABLE 8 Crosstabulation of School Subsidy By NSPA Membership

School Subsidy	NSPA M	embership	•
	Yes	No	<del></del>
None .	<sup>*</sup> 5	42	(47)
\$70-\$900:	3.	10	(13)
\$1,200-\$2,50	0 1	9 Î	(10)
\$3,000+	5 ,	5	(10)
	(14)	(66)	80
$x^2 =$	9.518	df = 3	p < .03

TABLE 9

Crosstabulation of School Subsidy By CSPA Membership

School Subsidy	CSPA I	Membership	
	Yes	No	
None.	7	40	(47)
\$70 <b>~</b> \$900	1	12	(13)
\$1,200-\$2,500	. 2	8	(10)
\$3,000+	5	, 5	(10)
	(15)	(65)	80
$x^2 = 7$	.923	df = 3	p < .05

TABLÉ 10

Crosstabulation of School Subsidy By Quill and Scroll Membership

School Subsidy	Quill	and Scroll Me	mbership -
	Yes	No ·	
None	3	44	(47)
\$70-\$900	1	12	(13)
\$1,200-\$2,50	0 2	8	(10)
\$3,000+	. 5	. 5	(10)
•	(11)	(69)	80
x <sup>2</sup> =	13.963	df = 3	p < .01

TABLE 11

Crosstabulation of Accepting Ads By Circulation

Accept	Ads Circu	lation	•	•	
	. 1-500	600-1,000	1,200-1,900	2,000+	
Yes	5	10	12	.,7	(34)
No	7	4	. 2	<b>S</b> 33	(46)
•	(12)	(14)	(14)	(40)	80
	$x^2 = 25.726$	df	i= _33'	o <b>&lt; .</b> 001	

TABLE 13. -

Crosstabulation of Accepting Advertising By Printing Method

Accept Ads	<u>Printing</u>	Printing Method		
• • •	Offset	Page in	Local Paper	
Yes	32	2.	(34)	
.No	12	· 34	(46) .	,
•	(44)	(36)	80	
$x^2 = 33$	.861 ` ` d£	<b>=</b> 1 .	p < .001	•

TABLE 13
Crosstabulation of Cost Per Issue By Typesetting

Cost Per Is	suc Do	Do Typesetting?			
-	Y	e <b>s</b> h	No	,	
·/ None	•	4 3	37 (4	41)	
\$1-\$100	•	4	5	(9)	18
\$101-\$25	0	2 1	10 (:	12)	
\$251-\$40	0	6	4 (:	10)	
\$401+		1	7	(8)	
	(1		63)	80	
	$x^2 = 15.62$	df <u> </u>	= 4	p < .0.	

#### TABLE 14

# Crosstabulation of Cost Per Issue By Accepting Advertising

Cost Per Issue	Accept	Advertising	•	
	Yes	No		
None	. 5	36	(41)	
\$1-\$100	3	6	. (9)	
\$101-\$250	9	. 3	(12)	
\$251-\$400	9.	1	(10)	
\$4.01+	8	.0	: (8)	
٠.١,	(34)	.′ (46)	80	<u> </u>
$x^2 = 40.$	. 961	df = 4	. p < .0	01